

can lead to fulfillment in life. It's an illusion, and I urge you to reject it.

If you do fall short, know that it is never too late to recover and get back on the right track. There was a time in my life when alcohol competed for my affections, but I found salvation in my family and my faith. There's no shame in recognizing your failings or getting help if you need it. The tragedy comes when we fail to take responsibility for our weaknesses and surrender to them.

And finally, you probably don't realize it, but you're role models for others in your life, whether it's a little brother or sister who looks up to you or someone else who admires you. Positive role models are greatly needed in this society. And I urge you to set a hopeful example by leading lives of character and integrity. And if you do, you'll be proud of who you are; you'll teach others around you that a life of responsibility leads to a life of fulfillment.

In all these ways, your generation has an opportunity to show how timeless values can be applied in a modern world. And as you do so, history offers noble examples to follow, including many from right here in South Carolina. From this State came a signer of the Declaration of Independence who lost his fortune fighting for our freedom but never regretted the fight. From this State came the brave colonel who drew a line in the sand against oppressive rule at the old Spanish mission called the Alamo. And from this State came the child of slaves who was among the first black women to be an adviser to Presidents.

And from this State came a young man who went off to serve his country in World War II. His last name was Smith, and it happens his first name was Furman. Private Furman Smith—he never attended this school, but he grew up right down the road. While on duty in Italy, Private Smith's unit came under heavy fire. He fended off 80 enemy soldiers to defend his wounded buddies. He died at the age of 19, with his rifle still clutched in his hand. For the acts of courage and character that cost him his life, Furman Smith was awarded the Medal of Honor. Sixty-four years ago this very day, that young man carried the Furman name into

history. And now, in a very different way, so will each of you.

May the values you learned here always guide your course. May you always make the right choices. And may you always look in the mirror and be proud of what you see.

Congratulations. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:09 p.m. at Paladin Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to David E. Shi, president, Furman University.

## **Proclamation 8266—Italian Independence Day, 2008**

*May 30, 2008*

*By the President of the United States of America*

### **A Proclamation**

On Italian Independence Day, we recognize our friendship with the nation of Italy, and we celebrate the generations of Italian Americans who have made significant contributions to our national character.

June 2, 1946, marks the birth of the Italian Republic, the long-awaited triumph of liberty and democracy in an ancient land. Today, Italy is a friend of the United States and an ally of freedom and peace. Italians and Americans join together on Italian Independence Day to commemorate Italy's independence and celebrate its rich history.

The people of our two countries share special ties rooted in history, friendship, and family. Millions of American citizens have Italian ancestry, and they and their forebears have helped shape our way of life. Americans are grateful for the many contributions Italians and Italian Americans have made to our history and our culture, and we are proud that our nations are allies in the cause of peace and security around the world.

In celebrating Italian Independence Day, we commemorate the freedoms our countries hold dear, and we honor the generations of Italian Americans who came to our shores seeking opportunity. They have helped to shape our great Nation and influenced American life for the better.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by

the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 2, 2008, as Italian Independence Day. I call upon all Americans to observe this day by celebrating the contributions of Italians and Italian Americans to our Nation.

**In Witness Whereof**, I have hereunto set my hand this thirtieth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-second.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:59 a.m., June 3, 2008]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on June 4.

### **Remarks at the Ford's Theatre Gala**

*June 1, 2008*

Thank you all. Hal, thanks for the introduction. And I want to thank you all for supporting Ford's Theatre. Laura and I have been coming here now for 8 years to the Ford's Theatre gala, and this is by far the best.

We want to thank our choir and our orchestra and all the fabulous performers for taking time out of your busy schedules to help—to support this really important part of Washington. And Gatlin is probably saying, of course, I said that for the crowd last year. [*Laughter*] But, no, it really was fantastic. And it's such an uplifting performance and a reminder of what a great President Abraham Lincoln was.

I do want to thank Paul Tetreault for being a really fabulous director of the Ford's Theatre. And I want to thank the gala cochair and all the people who support the Ford's Theatre. I know you're excited about the opening of the renovated Ford's Theatre in February 2009. Laura and I are excited too. Just send the pictures down to Crawford. [*Laughter*]

Thanks for a fabulous evening, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7 p.m. at the National Theatre. In his remarks, he referred to actor

Hal Holbrook; musician Larry Gatlin; and Paul R. Tetreault, producing director, Ford's Theatre. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2.

### **Remarks on Presenting Posthumously the Congressional Medal of Honor to Private First Class Ross A. McGinnis**

*June 2, 2008*

Good morning. Welcome to the White House. A week ago, on Memorial Day, the flag of the United States flew in halfstaff in tribute to those who fell in service to our country. Today we pay special homage to one of those heroes: Private First Class Ross Andrew McGinnis of the United States Army. Private McGinnis died in a combat zone in Iraq on December the 4th, 2006, and for his heroism that day, he now receives the Medal of Honor.

In a few moments, the Military Aide will read the citation, and the Medal will be accepted by Ross's mom and dad, Romyne and Tom. It's a privilege to have with us as well, Becky and Katie, Ross's sisters.

I also want to thank the other distinguished guests who have joined us: Mr. Vice President; Secretary Jim Peake of Veterans Affairs; Secretary Pete Geren of the Army; Secretary Michael Wynne of the Air Force; General Jim "Hoss" Cartwright, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I appreciate other members of the administration for joining us.

I want to thank Members of the United States Congress who have joined us today: Steve Buyer, John Peterson, Louie Gohmert. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate the chaplain for the prayer. We welcome friends and family members of Ross, as well as members of the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, including Charlie Company, that's with us today.

We're also joined by Private McGinnis's vehicle crew, the very men who witnessed his incredible bravery. We welcome Sergeant First Class Cedric Thomas, Staff Sergeant Ian Newland, Sergeant Lyle Buehler, and Specialist Sean Lawson.